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Date: September 12, 2002

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Employment Agencies Work to Help Airport Screeners

SEATTLE – State and nonprofit agencies that provide employment services are working together to help security screeners at Seattle's Sea-Tac airport who may lose their jobs because of new federal laws.

By Nov. 19, all airport security personnel must be federal employees and will be required to meet more stringent hiring requirements. Security screeners at Sea-Tac and other airports must apply for the newly federalized positions to be considered. They won't be hired automatically, even if they meet the job requirements.

Applicants must be U.S. citizens. They must also have either a high school diploma or equivalent, or one year of security screening experience.

Current security screeners and others interested in the federal jobs can apply online at www.tsa.dot.gov or by calling toll free 1-877-631-JOBS (5627). Online applicants will receive an immediate response stating whether they meet the minimum requirements.

Two private security companies, ICTS-Huntleigh and Olympic, employ Sea-Tac's approximately 1,100 screeners. The companies are expected to lay off staff as a result of the new regulations. It's likely some, but not all, will be hired back as federal employees.

The state's employment partners have formed the Sea-Tac Airport Security Reemployment Committee to help get the word out about the federal hiring procedures, track effects on workers, and distribute information to affected employees. The committee has scheduled workshops on Sept. 13 and Sept. 16 to inform affected workers about available services, including unemployment benefits, job placement assistance and job training. Workers should check with their employers for workshop locations and times.

Partner groups include: the Washington State Employment Security Department, WorkSource, Airport JOBS, the King County Reemployment Support Center, AFL-CIO, local community colleges, Huntleigh, Olympic and the newly formed Transportation Security Administration.

Airport Jobs is assisting current screeners by offering English classes and information about the immigration process. Through the month of September, it is also offering computer instruction and interviewing workshops to candidates who meet federal eligibility requirements. Port JOBS, a nonprofit organization, runs Airport Jobs at Sea-Tac. More information is available on Port JOBS' Web site at www.portjobs.org or by calling (206) 835-7501.

Applicants who do not meet the minimum requirements for the federal positions or fail to pass further assessments are encouraged to seek work through one of the state's WorkSource centers. For locations, see the WorkSource Web site at <http://go2worksource.com>.

Laid-off workers can apply for unemployment benefits online 24 hours a day at <http://go2ui.com>.

They can also apply by phone from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays, except state holidays. Waits are shortest during early mornings, late evenings and later in the week. TeleCenter staff can take applications in English, Spanish, and all other languages.

Jobless workers can call the following numbers to apply for unemployment benefits:

- Seattle: (206) 766-6000
- Tacoma: (253) 396-3500
- Spokane: (509) 893-7000
- All other areas: 1-800-362-4636
- TDD: 1-800-365-8969
- Spanish: 1-800-360-2271

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